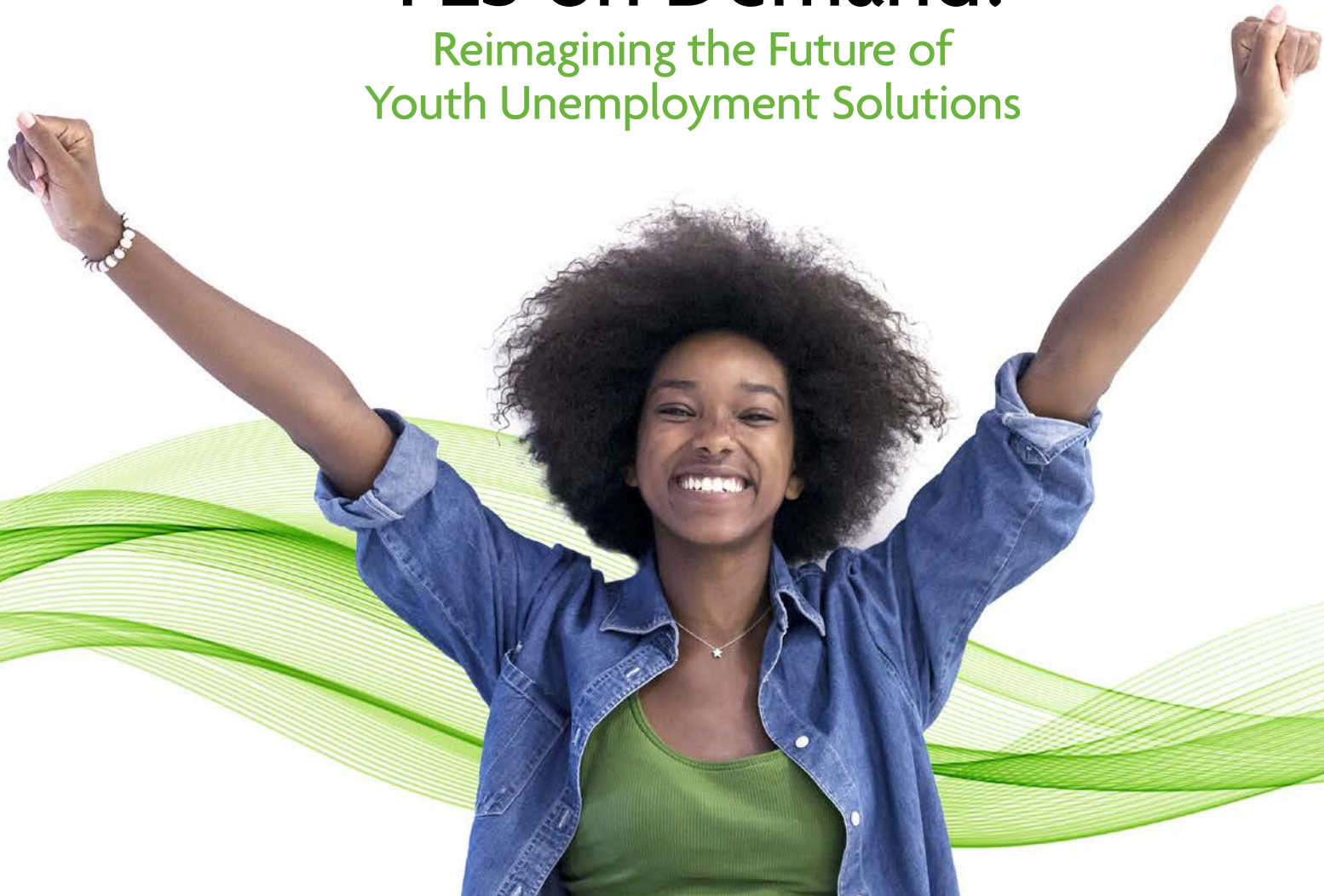




# YES on Demand!

Reimagining the Future of  
Youth Unemployment Solutions



# Contents

.....	
About	1
.....	
Introduction: The Future of Youth at Work	4
.....	
YES on Demand!: Evidence-Based Solutions to Complex Problems	7
.....	
Mentorship: Supportive Connections for Youth	10
.....	
Skills to Succeed: Essential Skills and Digital Literacy	13
.....	
Mental Health: Specialized Supports for Specialized Experiences	16
.....	
Entrepreneurship: From Gig to Gig	19
.....	
YES on Demand!: Overview of National Work	21
.....	
What's Next for YES?	23
.....	
Acknowledgement	23
.....	
References	24
.....	

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# About

Citi Foundation



## About the Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress

YES on Demand! is made possible by the generous support of the Citi Foundation. Pathways to Progress is the Citi Foundation's response to the global reality of youth unemployment.

As part of the Citi Foundation's mandate to invest in career and economic development programs for young people aged 16 to 24, Pathways to Progress' initiatives support youth to develop

an entrepreneurial mindset, strengthen their leadership capacity, hone financial and workplace skills, and engage in the formal economy through a first job.

## About YES On Demand!

YES On Demand! is a program developed to address the persistent issue of youth unemployment through four evidence-based solutions: (1) mentorship, (2) online employability and

entrepreneurship training, (3) entrepreneurial skills training, and (4) specialized programming for youth experiencing mental health issues. As part of the Citi Foundation's global Pathways to Progress

initiative, YES has worked to share these resources with other non-profit organizations through a nation-wide knowledge transfer and training program.

“During the current time of remote service, the online tools that [YES] provides has become even more beneficial. This material has allowed us to follow up and provide one-on-one attention in the areas that are most needed for each participant.” – DIVERSECITY, VANCOUVER BC

## About YES



Changing Lives Forever

Youth Employment Services  
YES believes that employment is empowerment, and that employment is the cornerstone of safe and healthy communities. Since 1968, YES has worked to become a leader in Canada for supporting youth in their

employment journeys, and has empowered hundreds of thousands of youth to find employment and change their lives. Our mission is to empower low-income and vulnerable youth aged 15 to 29 (and people aged 30+ through unique programming) in the Greater Toronto Area and beyond to find and maintain employment. YES analyses it's ROI by reviewing cost of programs

over return to the economy in wages at exit, 3 and 6 months as well as the income status of youth upon entry to ensure our programs present value for money. We also understand through client surveys and data the social and competency gains and impacts. Through our programs and services, youth develop new skills, gain confidence and motivation, and identify and pursue their goals.

“I liked that I was heard and understood by the career counsellor, and had an opportunity to voice concerns about the job search, work environment, and job fit. The staff was able to provide mental health supports and prepared me to ask for accommodations when on the job.”

– YES ON DEMAND! PARTICIPANT

2019-2020  
**12,814**  
youth served



#### BY GENDER;

47%

Female

52%

Male

0.5%

Trans

0.5%

Other identified gender

#### BY AGE:

29%

15-19 years old

36%

20-24 years old

25%

25-40 years old

10%

31+ years old

#### WHO WE'RE REACHING:

27%

of youth served disclosed having a physical disability, mental health issue, or other health problem

56%

of youth served identified as Black, Indigenous, or otherwise racialized

20%

of youth served were newcomers to Canada

10%

increase in youth who identified language as a barrier to employment

#### OUR IMPACT

86%

youth who attend YES successfully gain employment, enter training or schooling, or start their own business.

1,887

racialized youth became more financially secure

535

youth who disclosed having a disability gained employment

79%

of youth who had been out of work for over a year had a successful outcome

91%

success rate for youth who accessed workshops online

#### BY COMPLETED EDUCATION

64%

Grade 12 or less

35%

diploma or higher

1%

other education completed

#### TIME OUT OF WORK, SCHOOL, OR TRAINING

56%

0-15 weeks

24%

16-51 weeks

20%

52+ weeks



# Introduction: The Future of Youth at Work

## Youth Employability: The Global Landscape

A young person's relationship to their first job is deeply personal. It symbolizes economic independence, empowerment, and ultimately, a sense of future. It is well-researched and proven that youth unemployment impacts us individually, socially, and systemically. Unemployment in any form has negative ramifications on productivity, and investment and spending capacity, contributing to inequity and social tension. For our youth, these impacts have even bigger ramifications; at an individual level, young people who are unemployed are more likely to being unemployed later in life (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011), are more likely to experience mental health issues (Garipey & Iyer, 2019), are at an increased risk for alcohol addictions (Thern, Ramstedt, & Svensson, 2019), and negatively effect well-being (Chen & Hou, 2019).

On a macro level, when young people are not fully participating in the labour market, it affects not only their ability to support themselves, but also affects their ability to support their families and contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of a given nation. Recently, the spillover effects of unemployment on those who are not unemployed has also been examined. High regional unemployment can negatively impact the well-being of individuals who are working, as employees contend with fears of losing their own jobs (Helliwell & Huang, 2014). Youth unemployment continues to be a global reality, affecting one-third

of young people worldwide (Goldin, Hobson, Glick, Lundberb, & Puerto, 2015).

The experiences of youth in Canada reflect this reality. In Canada, the rate of youth who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) ranges from 6% for young people aged 15 to 19 to as high as 15% for young people aged 25 to 29 (Brunet, 2018). Marginalized youth are particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon. Youth who are Black, Indigenous or otherwise racialized (Turcotte, 2020), youth who experience homelessness (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2013), youth who are trans or gender non-conforming (Bauer,

2015), youth who experience mental health issues (Garipey & Iyer, 2019), and youth who are refugees or newcomers to Canada (Woodgate & Busolo, 2018) all are overrepresented in Canada's unemployment statistics.

It is essential to remember that at the heart of this narrative lies people, not numbers. Youth are not monolithic. They have hopes, dreams and aspirations, and are actively seeking an urgent, comprehensive and targeted response that invests in their well-being and the well-being of our collective futures.

“I’ve been having trouble finding work that aligns with my career interests and with the pandemic a lot of my days were melding together, and I felt unproductive and anxious. I was looking for something that could help me find work and boost my confidence about job searching or help me learn something. I also thought it might be helpful to interact with other people in a similar position.” – YOD YOUTH PARTICIPANT

## A Pandemic-Induced Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for young people globally. In March 2020, 16.8% of Canadian youth were unemployed; a rate which nearly doubled to 29.4% in May 2020 as a result of the pandemic (Thind, et al., 2020). What we know to be true, based on evidence presented from past recessions is that, time and time again, young people are likely to be among those hardest hit by the pandemic-induced economic crisis.

The nature of the unemployment crisis in a pandemic is multidimensional. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, education and training has been disrupted, the current wave of job losses has reduced earnings and threatened employment rights, and increased obstacles to finding work have exacerbated a pre-existing youth unemployment

crisis. Part of Canada's collective COVID-19 response plan requires an investment in future-proofed and essential skills for unemployed youth, including programs that address skill gaps such as critical thinking, cross-cultural competency, digital literacy, decision making, and social and emotional skills: the very skills identified within the Government of Canada's Essential Skills framework (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2020). Youth are asking for solutions that enable us to take advantage of a generational opportunity to invest in Canada's collective human capital. Through the YES on Demand! framework, we are in a position to ask ourselves: what does a reimagined youth-centered solution to the persistent issue of youth unemployment look like?

## The Changing Employment Landscape


Job growth in the information and communications technology (ICT) space is outpacing the overall economy by a large margin, and we have more that needs to be done in Canada in order to ensure our labour force remains competitive. In 2019 the ICT Sector accounted for 4.8% of the national GDP, outpacing the Canadian economy growth of 1.5% by over three percentage points (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2020). A 2017 report by the Information and Communications Technology Council of Canada (ICTC) estimated that 216,000 digitally-skilled occupations would need to be filled by 2021 (Information and Communications Technology

Council, 2017), making it all the more important that pathways to those professions for youth are developed, robust, and well-supported.

While all sectors are likely to be impacted by the pandemic, the Government of Canada anticipates that the "ICT sector is likely to weather this storm better than most..." and, further still, that the sector is "well positioned to benefit from the economy-wide recovery" (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2020). YES on Demand! serves to provide evidence-based solutions to the complex employment problems faced by today's youth; but equally important is how capable these resources are for setting up youth for the future.

### **Why are young people disproportionately affected by economic recessions?**

- **Young people are cheaper to fire.**  
Employment protection legislation typically prescribes an increased cost of firing workers with tenure.
- **Young people are less protected.**  
Youth are more likely to work in temporary and informal employment settings, and are less likely to work in unionized environments (Visser, 2019)
- **Young people have less experience.**  
Workers continue to learn work-specific and organization-specific competencies for a significant period after they are hired, improving their productivity over time. Firing workers with more experience is therefore seen to be a greater loss of productivity.

A photograph of a group of people, mostly young adults, sitting at round tables in a large room. The room is decorated with several bunches of balloons in shades of blue, green, and yellow. The people are engaged in conversation and looking towards the camera. The image has a semi-transparent green overlay on the right side where the text is located.

“During the current time of remote service, the online tools that [YES] provides has become even more beneficial. This material has allowed us to follow up and provide one-on-one attention in the areas that are most needed for each participant.”

– DIVERSECITY, VANCOUVER BC

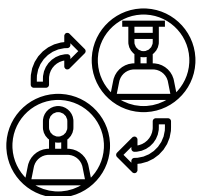


# YES on Demand!: Evidence-Based Solutions to Complex Problems

The YES on Demand! (YOD) program was designed specifically to address youth unemployment through four evidence-based solutions that cater to the needs of youth across Canada. We are excited to share, for each of these models, our learnings and best practices for delivering youth-focused programming in a way that best meets the needs of youth.

## MENTORSHIP

[WWW.YES.ON.CA/YES-MENTORSHIP-HUB/](http://WWW.YES.ON.CA/YES-MENTORSHIP-HUB/)



For the YES Mentorship Program, connection is the avenue to opportunity. The Mentorship Program brings youth together with industry leaders to build capacity, improve employability, and

foster entrepreneurship through supportive, caring and trusting relationships.

What do youth gain from the Mentorship program?

- Access to a network of over 100 industry leaders
- A supportive mentor-mentee relationship designed to improve self-esteem, foster a sense

of self-efficacy, and encourage independent living skills.

- A platform that facilitates meaningful career focused conversations, both online and in person.

## SKILLS TO SUCCEED

[WWW.YES.ON.CA/ONLINE-WORKSHOPS/](http://WWW.YES.ON.CA/ONLINE-WORKSHOPS/)



YES' Skills to Succeed platform, powered by Accenture, is a free online training hub which provides access to over 100 interactive

workshops and resources intended to support employability skill development, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship skills.

What do youth gain from the Skills to Succeed platform?

- Access to over 100 online courses and resources
- Accessible online delivery formats
- Structured and organized platform that can be seamlessly integrated into other employment programming to create blended learning models.

## EMPOWERING THE EMPLOYMENT SECTOR TO SERVE YOUTH WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

[WWW.YES.ON.CA/MENTAL-HEALTH-CURRICULUM/](http://WWW.YES.ON.CA/MENTAL-HEALTH-CURRICULUM/)



Originally piloted through a partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Counseling Foundation of Canada, the Mental Health curriculum is a specialized resource designed

to support young people experiencing mental health issues advocate for themselves and secure employment.

What do youth gain from the Mental Health curriculum?

- Knowledge of self-accommodating strategies to navigate various workplace settings

- Skill development to support them in integrating mental health wellness in their daily lives to manage stress, burnout, and work-life balance.
- An interactive, adaptive curriculum that can be delivered in group or one-on-one settings.

## SPECIALIZED YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CURRICULUM

[WWW.YES.ON.CA/SPECIALIZED-YOUTH-ENTREPRENEURSHIP-CURRICULUM/](http://WWW.YES.ON.CA/SPECIALIZED-YOUTH-ENTREPRENEURSHIP-CURRICULUM/)



The Entrepreneurship curriculum is YOD's newest offering, bringing together the skills, knowledge and resources aimed at supporting young potential business owners and providing them with the information needed to sustain a business for themselves.

What do youth gain from the Entrepreneurship curriculum?

- An in-depth knowledge of the entrepreneurship model and associated competencies
- Skills and strategies to develop a business plan, manage business financial health, and apply basic marketing concepts
- Eight innovative training modules that align with Canada's current business climate and technological advances.

### YOD Initiative Insights<sup>1</sup>:

88%

of youth surveyed learned skills from the YOD programs that they continue to use in their lives.

88%

of youth surveyed say the YOD programs have helped them set goals for themselves

100%

of youth surveyed say they would recommend the YOD programs to their friends

<sup>1</sup> Total of 17 youth surveyed in a voluntary online survey



# Three years of YES on Demand!: Highlights

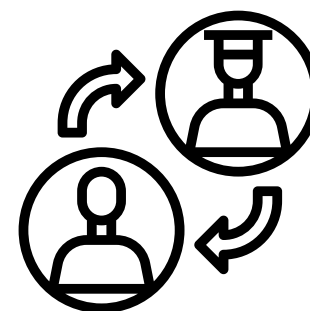
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Launch of 3 YES on Demand! (YOD) resources</li><li>● YOD partners with 5 coalition partners in Winnipeg and Vancouver</li><li>● YES presents Specialized Mental Health Curriculum at ODEN<sup>1</sup>'s Rethinking Disabilities Conference, &amp; at Cannexus – Canada's largest conference for career counsellors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● New coalition partners are added in Calgary and Ottawa</li><li>● Two community roundtables are held in Vancouver and Winnipeg, each attended by over 100 people</li><li>● The Specialized Entrepreneurship curriculum is developed and launched at the end of Year 2</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Additional trainings are held across all four partner cities for the Specialized Entrepreneurship Curriculum</li><li>● The Skills to Succeed platform is scaled to be made available to a greater number of partners in Toronto and in Ontario.</li><li>● The Specialized Mental Health Curriculum is revised with feedback from YES staff, youth and partners</li><li>● The Specialized Entrepreneurship Curriculum is made available virtually through webinars</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> ODEN refers to the Ontario Disability Employment Network, a professional body of employment service providers.

# Mentorship: Supportive Connections for Youth

## YOD Mentorship Impacts:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>158 YES youth and 16 indirect youth<sup>1</sup> registered, trained, and given access to mentors through the mentorship platform.</li> <li>58 rigorously trained industry leaders are registered on the platform as mentors.</li> <li>6 in-person group mentorship sessions are held at YES</li> <li>503 mentor-mentee interactions, including 1:1 meetings, group sessions, and group mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>216 new youth join the mentorship platform</li> <li>52 new industry leaders join the platform as mentors</li> <li>7 in-person group mentoring sessions are held at yes</li> <li>529 mentor-mentee interactions, including 1:1 meetings, group sessions, and group mentoring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>178 YES youth registered, trained, and given access to mentors through the mentorship platform.</li> <li>26 new industry leaders join the platform as mentors.</li> <li>10 group mentorship sessions are held at YES (both in-person and virtually)</li> <li>144 mentor-mentee interactions, including 1:1 meetings, group sessions, and group mentoring.</li> <li>588 total mentors and mentees registered and trained on the mentorship platform</li> </ul>



“My meeting with mentor AT went great [...] He taught me that learning does not end even after you get your dream job and get a certificate from school or work.” – YOD MENTEE

Mentorship is a cornerstone of youth programming. Mentoring programs are shown to have positive effects on mentees, support social skill development, promote resiliency, and influence the entrepreneurial futures of young people (Shittu, 2017). Mentoring and coaching are interventions that are explicitly designed to suit the context, knowledge, and passion of the participants, and is an approach well suited to improving the labour market outcomes for youth (Kluve, et al., 2017).

*Stepping Up*, the Government of Ontario’s evidence-based strategic framework for improving youth

outcomes, relied heavily on mentorship-models of programming and partnerships aimed at youth ages 12 to 25, evidenced by their 2016 annual report. The framework’s 2014 report confirmed that the case in Ontario is what the research has demonstrated to be the case globally: when young people have access to supportive parents, peers, schools, and communities, they are more likely to succeed in school, have a stronger sense of self, and are better equipped to navigate challenging life circumstances. (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2014).

But is becoming increasingly less feasible for

immediate family and parents to be the sole positive adult role models in a young person’s life; single-parent households, or families with parents that both work full time, or parents that hold more than one job mean that parents aren’t always immediately accessible. Youth are also busier, engaging in activities at school and in their community. Technology is also continuing to influence how young people interact with each other. Mentorship models need to be adaptive to account for changing family dynamics, while also being accessible and making effective use of technological means of communication.

<sup>1</sup> Indirect youth refer to youth reached through coalition partners



“[...] We talked about her aspirations and what she is interested in doing. She is really passionate about starting a not-for-profit organization to merge the generational gap between older and younger women through activities, and also provide a space for minority women to connect and build a community. I actually connected her to one of my other friends who is doing similar things so that she can ask about the process.” – YOD MENTOR

The YES Mentorship Model strives to be just that: an evidence-based program that relies on screening, high-quality training, and ongoing support for mentors, all of which are characteristics shown to be best practices for mentorship models (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2014).

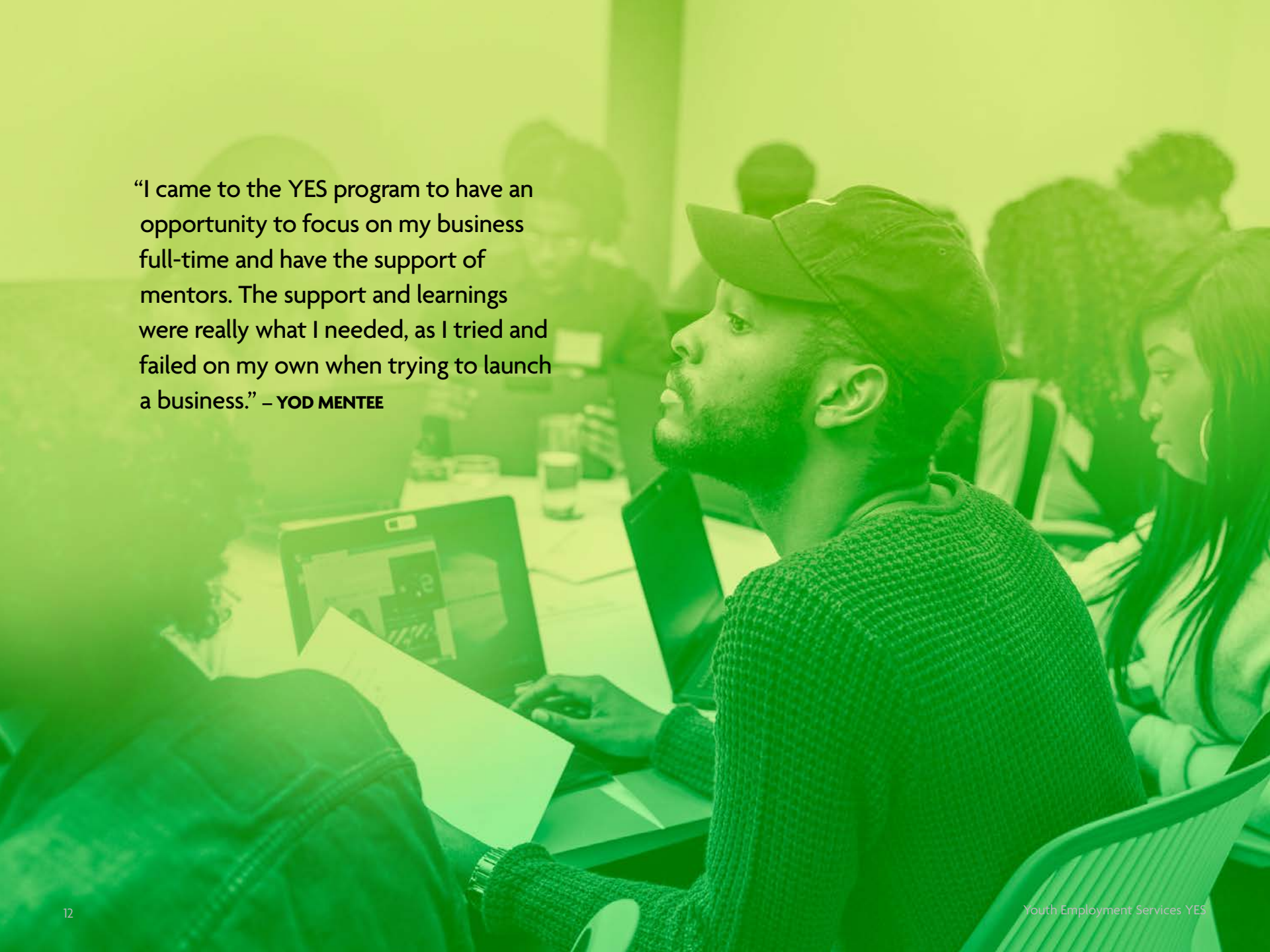
## Best Practices for Youth Mentorship

1. **Ensure the mentorship setting suits the needs of youth.** YES recognizes that not all youth are ready for mentorship in a one-on-one capacity. However, they may be more prepared for and more responsive to meeting with mentors in a group setting. Shorter, structured amount of time can help to ensure the mentorship meeting is valuable for both mentors and mentees.
2. **Face to face mentor interactions are key to engagement.** Direct communication with mentors ensures that youth feel more fully supported, and that their mentors are more accessible to them. This does not necessarily mean that mentors need to share physical space – “face to face” online mentor interactions have also been responded to positively by youth.
3. **Program staff need to invest time in developing a rapport with youth.** It is not enough for the mentor and mentee to have a positive relationship; program staff must also develop a relationship with youth; when a mentorship coordinator can facilitate and introduce mentees to mentors, youth feel as though there are multiple individuals accessible to them that will listen to them, and thus feel safer engaging in the program.
4. **Youth need the space to identify their own mentors.** YES made use of a mentorship platform with a built in algorithm that provided mentors and mentees with a monthly match based on background, interests, and what each person hoped to gain from mentorship. Although this was a time effective resource, YES learned that youth are more likely to have quality, ongoing interactions with mentors they are able to choose on their own, or when mentorship coordinators leverage their relationship with the youth to identify suitable mentor-mentee matches.

5. **Timely feedback is needed to support program development.** Timely feedback is critical to ensuring that mentorship programming can continuously improve. Creating effective feedback mechanisms that can either be captured through in-person conversations with staff, or through other channels, ensures better tracking of engagement, interactions, and overall program success.

### How did youth respond to the YOD Mentorship program?

- One-on-one support and services offered through the YOD program, both online and in-person, are overwhelmingly considered to be beneficial by the youth who access them
- Of youth surveyed who accessed the YOD Mentorship program, 91% indicated they felt they were supported to achieve their goals.
- Of youth surveyed who accessed the YOD Mentorship program, 100% indicated they felt safe attending YES programming.

A young man with a beard, wearing a dark cap and a textured sweater, is seated at a desk in a classroom or workshop. He is looking intently at a laptop screen. Other people are visible in the background, also working at desks. The entire image has a green color overlay.

“I came to the YES program to have an opportunity to focus on my business full-time and have the support of mentors. The support and learnings were really what I needed, as I tried and failed on my own when trying to launch a business.” – YOD MENTEE

# Skills to Succeed: Essential Skills and Digital Literacy

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1115 youth participants complete 12,805 courses on the platform</li> <li>549 youth (52% of YES youth) who accessed Skills to Succeed platform became gainfully employed in an income generating job, returned to school or training, or launched their business</li> <li>Skills to Succeed is embedded into 15 programs internally at YES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1339 youth completed over 13,322 courses on the platform</li> <li>1046 (86% of YES youth) who accessed the Skills to Succeed platform became gainfully employed in an income generating job, returned to school or training, or launched their business<sup>1</sup></li> <li>Skills to Succeed is embedded into 10 programs internally at YES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1357 youth completed 22 161 courses on the platform.</li> <li>Skills to Succeed is embedded into 16 programs internally at YES and 11 organizations throughout Canada</li> </ul>



Table. YOD Skills to Succeed Impacts

The demand for both “digital” and “human” interactions is driving the future economy. On the one hand, there is global demand for green economy jobs, for new roles in engineering, cloud computing, and product development, all of which rely on the adoption of new technologies; on the other hand demand for care economy jobs – roles in

marketing, sales and content production, roles that support people and culture – is equally on the rise (World Economic Forum, 2020).

When we consider the future of work, and the necessary steps to future-proof Canada’s economy and, by extension, Canada’s youth, it is clear that

young people need to be equipped and empowered to enter a workforce that is in transition. The ability to use digital skills to solve industry problems has become even more essential in the era of the pandemic, when digital literacy and computational thinking are not just nice-to-haves, but crucial for businesses to meet labour needs.

**“We have begun using Skills to Succeed since the pandemic broke, and this has allowed us to help Youth Job Connection clients attain their required Pre-Employment Training hours prior to going on to placement and completing the program.**

**– EMPLOYMENT PLANNING & COUNSELLING, PETERBOROUGH ON**

<sup>1</sup> Due to the transition to virtual work and overlapped reporting mechanisms, the percentage of youth who accessed the program and became gainfully employed cannot be determined for Year 3.

## Skills to Succeed: Back to Basics

YOD's Skills to Succeed, powered by Accenture, was initially developed and launched by Accenture in 2010 when the global economy was emerging from a recession impacting job-seekers – and youth in particular – around the world. Now in 2020, the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting economic crisis are accelerating digital transformation.

The Brookfield Institute's 2017 Report "Future-proof: Preparing young Canadians for the future of work" made six key cross-sectoral recommendations on supporting youth employability. Of those six, Skills to Succeed engages directly with three, including (1) a recommendation to explore digital literacy programs for youth across Canada, (2) a

recommendation to identify and address potential barriers to youth entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, and (3) enable lifelong learning and rapid, job-specific upskilling and retraining (Lamb & Doyle, 2017).

Skills to Succeed was in many ways designed for exactly these times. To date, thousands of youth have completed over tens of thousands of courses in digital literacy, employability skills and entrepreneurship through the Hub. Youth have responded positively to the self-paced nature of the programming, as have coalition partners, who have indicated a greater capacity to support youth with the resource support of Skills to Succeed.

75%  
of youth  
surveyed

who had accessed the Skills to Succeed program say that attending YES programming has made them better at problem solving.

"We appreciate both the technical skills offered, such as the use of Excel and Word programs, as well as other transferable skills such as tracking and staying organized. [...] The resources are beneficial to our programming. We've incorporated them more since our supports have been virtual." – OPERATION COME HOME, OTTAWA ON



## Best Practices for Essential Skill Development

1. **Staff must be adequately prepared to deliver course-specific content to youth.** When it comes to delivering digital literacy programs digitally, the platform has an impact, in as much as the content does. Staff connecting these programs to youth must be fully equipped on the intricacies of course platforms, ideally prior to connecting youth to the content in question.
2. **There must be a consistent investment in basic digital literacy skills.** The rapidly changing digital economy is unlikely to eliminate entire occupations, but it is almost guaranteed to change the nature of the way we work. Recognizing the ways in which jobs have already been transformed by simpler digital tools such as email, spreadsheets, and databases, a continued emphasis on those skills ensure youth are equipped to enter the workforce and maintain employment even as the workforce shifts around them.
3. **When considering what skills are considered to be “essential,” a holistic approach is best.** Coalition partners reported that it was not just the basic digital literacy skills, but supplementary courses such as “Professional Behaviours,” “Ethics at Work,” and other courses that emphasized time management and staying organized. Research has demonstrated that employers are more equipped to invest in job-specific skills training, while actively seeking clients that already understand and hold key soft skills such as professionalism, ethics, and other foundational traits of customer service.
4. **Marginalized youth should be considered at every level of program development.** YOD’s Skills to Succeed program is designed with marginalized youth in mind. Research has demonstrated the considerable impact gender, race, and education (to list just a few demographics) plays in a youth’s capacity to enter the workforce, and to have access to upskilling opportunities. Ensuring programs like Skill to Succeed remain free for the youth that benefit most from them is just one way of ensuring these supports and resources remain available to them.
5. **Delivery methods must be continuously adapted and adaptable.** Overwhelmingly, we heard from our coalition partners that the Skills to Succeed program was being relied on as a supplementary tool to support virtual programming during the pandemic. This need highlights the importance for resources and courses offered through Skills to Succeed and other pathways to be made available in a variety of formats.

# Mental Health: Specialized Supports for Specialized Experiences

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 <sup>1</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>610 youth participated in at least one specialized mental health workshops</li> <li>124 YES youth who accessed the curriculum became gainfully employed in an income-generating job, returned to school or training, or launched their own business</li> <li>42 staff from five agencies were trained on how to implement curriculum at their agency</li> <li>Youth reported an average satisfaction rating of 4.3 out of 5 with the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1452 youth participated in at least one specialized mental health workshop</li> <li>937 YES youth who accessed the curriculum became gainfully employed in an income-generating job, returned to school or training, or launched their own business</li> <li>23 staff from 9 agencies were trained on how to implement the curriculum at their agency.</li> <li>Youth reported an average satisfaction of 4.52 out of 5 with the program.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>838 youth participated in at least one specialized mental health workshop</li> <li>The YOD mental health curriculum is integrated into 10 programs at YES.</li> <li>All 6 modules were turned into webinars for participants to access remotely</li> </ul>

Table. YOD Mental Health Curriculum Impacts

The relationship between mental health and unemployment for youth is cyclical. Youth in Canada who experience mental health problems are more likely to be categorized as NEET (not in employment, education, or training); likewise, unemployment itself is detrimental for mental health and well-being (Garipey & Iyer, 2019). One study showed that youth aged 15 who were

NEET had increased depressive symptoms over the following two years, while their peers experienced no change in symptoms (Baggio, et al., 2015). Another study showed young people who were NEET during the ages of 12 to 17 had a 2.4 times greater risk of attempting suicide seven years later, compared to their peers who were in school (Symonds, Dietrich, Chow, & Salmela-Aro, 2016).



“GC found this workshop very useful. She shared that she has disclosed her mental health to employers in the past and faced discrimination because of it. She feels better prepared to disclose and seek accommodation after taking this workshop.” – PLEA COMMUNITY SERVICES BC COUNSELLOR

Yet another study showed the long-term effects of unemployment on mental health; youth who had experienced long periods of unemployment were more likely to report continued mental health issues at ages 21, 30, and 42 (Strandh, Winefield, Nilsson, & Hammarström, 2014).

The issue of mental health is more pressing still in light of the coronavirus pandemic. According to

<sup>1</sup> Year 3 statistics reflect data collected from September 2019 to May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Satisfaction ratings were only collected in this format for Year 1 and Year 2 of the YOD initiative.

a rapid survey conducted by CAMH in the April 2020, approximately half of the 622 youth surveyed across Ontario perceived that their mental health has declined since the beginning of the pandemic (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2020). Of the youth surveyed, youth reported being concerned with: their loved-ones becoming ill with COVID-19, they themselves becoming ill with COVID-19, and the disruptions that COVID-19 could pose to their education or career plans (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2020).

[QUOTE: I had mental health issues and thought the Lighthouse project would be a good fit for me. The staff was able to provide mental health supports on self-care, and prepared me to ask for accommodations when on the job. – *YOD Mental Health Curriculum participant*]

While youth unemployment experiences are not uniform, it is clear that the link between mental health and unemployment for youth requires a specialized response. For YES, *Empowering the Employment Sector to Serve Youth with Mental*

*Health Issues* is that response. Originally stemming from a one-year partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Counseling Foundation of Canada, the Lighthouse Project is designed to support job-seekers experiencing mental health issues find and maintain employment that suits their careers and their mental health needs. The mental health curriculum translates the Lighthouse Project learnings into a comprehensive curriculum that aims to balance education and skill development with advocacy. It covers critical information around the relationship between mental health and unemployment, it provides specific strategies that take youth mental health into account for succeeding at various phases of the job search, and it creates an environment to have important conversations about mental health stigma and what self-advocacy looks like in the workplace.

### **How does youth mental health impact their employment experiences?**

- The unemployment rate for individuals with mental health issues ranges from 70% to 90% in Canada (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2014)
- Youth who are marginalized report specific issues relating to mental health in the workplace, including youth who are racialized (Olawo, 2019) and youth who are transgender (Mizock & Mueser, 2014), creating multidimensional barriers relating to mental health and wellness.
- Only 1 out of 5 Canadian youth who need mental health services seeks and/or receives them (Youth Mental Health Canada, 2015), leading to mental health scarring in future years.

“The Mental Health workshops have been very useful for filling in what we came to recognize as a significant gap in our programming. [...] Clients have reported greater comfort in approaching the topic of mental wellbeing in the workplace, and greater comfort with the idea of asking for needed accommodations.” – **EMPLOYMENT PLANNING & COUNSELLING, PETERBOROUGH ON**

## Best Practices for Mental Health-focused Unemployment Supports:

1. **Foundational knowledge building is needed for staff delivering specialized mental health programming.** Despite the prevalence of youth experiencing mental health issues seeking employment, youth-serving professionals do not necessarily have access to knowledge frameworks and resources for supporting youth with mental health issues effectively. The specialized curriculum is designed for anyone to use, but developing capacity and confidence with partners through training has been shown to be most effective for implementation.
2. **Multiple delivery methods ensures that the curriculum can meet youth where they're at.** The YES Mental Health curriculum is designed with a facilitated group context in mind. However, when considering the impacts of mental health on desirable youth learning experiences, it is important to consider alternative delivery formats – through one-on-one sessions, through online delivery,

or even through follow-up phone calls – as alternative ways of disseminating and reinforcing information.

**Content should be structured and delivered to show that there is no one-size-fits-all type of “mental health issue.”** Though the mental health curriculum is designed as a specialized solution for youth experiencing mental health, it provides valuable information for youth at any phase of their employment journey, who may not necessarily self-identify with experiences of poor mental health. The strategies for managing anxiety and stress, for striving for work-life balance, and for advocacy in the workplace, are fundamental skills that all youth should have access to, if those concepts resonate with them.

3. **Conversations around mental health are most effective when contextualized within broader circumstances.** When delivering specialized programming of any kind – but particularly on the subject of mental health – it is important to

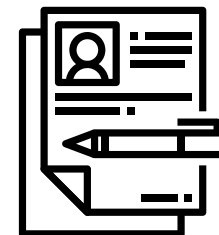
build space for youth to speak to the experiences in their lives directly, and to make room for them as the experts on their own experience. This can look like creating explicit space within programming for youth to speak to how events in their personal lives and in society broadly are impacting them, and what they've found to be the best strategies for coping.

4. **Mental health is not a fixed subject or experience; as our understanding changes, content must also change with it.** Our knowledge of mental health supports is changing rapidly. Outside of the context of a global pandemic, it is critical that knowledge around mental health is not presented in a fixed way, but rather, in a way that is responsive of mental health experts, to youth-serving professionals with experience supporting youth with mental health issues, and of course, to youth themselves.

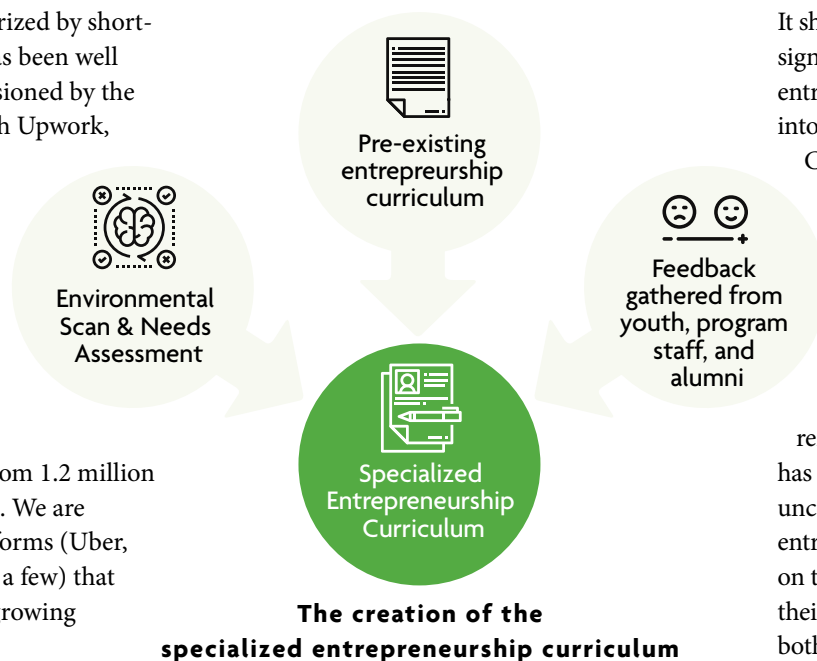


# Entrepreneurship: From Gig to Gig

Year 2	Year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum was professionally developed and designed</li> <li>A curriculum launch event was held with over 100 attendees</li> <li>Curriculum was disseminated to 32 agencies at the Futures and Cannexus conferences</li> <li>Entrepreneurship Curriculum was fully embedded into YES' BizStart program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100 YES youth and 12 indirect youth have completed at least one module</li> <li>64 staff from 34 agencies from Calgary, Winnipeg and Ottawa were trained on how to embed the curriculum at their agencies</li> </ul>



The rise of the gig economy, characterized by short-term, independent freelance work, has been well documented. A 2019 survey commissioned by the Freelancers Union in partnership with Upwork, found that 57 million American workers – or 35% of the labour force – were working as freelancers (Ozimek, 2019). Statistics Canada reported on a correlation between a growing youth workforce, and a growing gig economy (Jeon, Lieu, & Ostrovsky, 2019). From 1976 to 2018, the number of Canadians who reported being self-employed grew from 1.2 million to 2.9 million (Ysaad & Ferrao, 2019). We are also seeing an increase of online platforms (Uber, Airbnb, Upwork, Fiverr, to name just a few) that are designed explicitly to facilitate a growing freelance digital marketplace.



It should be noted that, although technology has a significant role to play in the shift towards freelance entrepreneurship, it is important to take this shift into the context of the economic landscape. Statistics Canada indicated that the most recent significant increase in self-employment occurred during 2009 – at the peak years of the most recent economic recession (Ysaad & Ferrao, 2019). Though it remains to be seen how the economic impact of the pandemic will affect the current workforce, the appetite for entrepreneurial skills and knowledge remains. Even before the pandemic, the world has been continuously characterized by greater uncertainty and more flexible work solutions. Young entrepreneurs are seeking to make a positive impact on their world by creating something unique and their own. YES has understood this to be the case both as evidenced by the research, and anecdotally through youth testimonials.

The Entrepreneurship curriculum – which was launched in 2019 – provides specific resources and tools to support youth exploring entrepreneurship as a career option, exploring topics such as: social media platforms for business, social media marketing, business

planning, financial management, the opportunity identification process, and mental health and self-care for entrepreneurs. Its aim is to empower youth to pursue their goals and ambitions with the knowledge to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape.

## Best Practices for Delivering Specialized Entrepreneurship Employment Supports

After one complete year of program delivery, the following best practices will help to inform YES' future delivery of the specialized entrepreneurship curriculum.

1. **Start with key building blocks, and go from there.** The entrepreneurship curriculum's initial success is predicated on the information being grounded in the basics. Information can be built on and progressed when the foundational knowledge is presented in an engaging and stimulating way.
2. **The program is structured in a way that allows for maximum flexibility.** Program coordinators have the ability to deliver the information themselves using the facilitator's guide; students can go use the material for self-study, or materials can be converted into online delivery

formats such as webinars. All three formats have been used successfully at YES.

3. **The depth of the content impacts the quality of the experience.** Modules can be broken down to be delivered across days or even across a full week, depending on the mode of delivery, and how much time is given for activities. This gives time for students to engage fully with the concepts and apply them to their own experiences. This is especially important for newer concepts not typically associated with entrepreneurship, such as the information relating to emotional intelligence and its relevance for business.

### Strategies for delivering online curriculum to youth (YouthRex, 2020)

- **Foster “attentive connection.”** An attentive connection is created when facilitators prioritize intentionally connecting
- Establish group norms
- Use mixed methods for engaging youth
- Manage pacing and participant energy
- Be available outside of scheduled programming.

# YES on Demand!: Overview of National Work

*YES on Demand!*'s impact is made possible by our coalition partners across four main cities (Vancouver, BC, Calgary AB, Winnipeg MN, Ottawa ON) as well as throughout Ontario. The *YES on Demand!* Team has travelled to our partner cities across the 3 years, utilizing a train-the-trainer model to support partners in integrating all four of the YOD resources, elevating the stories of our youth and their incredible achievements through the YOD

framework. The relationships have also extended beyond the scope of YOD itself, as it has enabled us to support coalition partners such as DIVERSEcity in Vancouver and the Immigrant Education Society in Calgary, in their efforts to secure funding to deliver mentorship programs and services.

In tandem with our traveling train-the-trainer model, YES hosted 2 COMPASS community roundtable events in Vancouver and in Winnipeg in

2019. These events brought together over 100 attendees, representing our national partners, local youth, thought leaders and other key community organizations and stakeholders to discuss contemporary issues of youth employment, and how YOD could be leveraged to address those issues. Each of these roundtables drew in televised media coverage from Breakfast Television Vancouver to CTV Morning Live. We have been so grateful to share our partnership with the Citi Foundation and the impacts of YOD to our broader national community.

## Vancouver

Aunt Leah's, Boys & Girls Club of South Coast BC, DIVERSEcity, Plea

## Calgary

Boys & Girls Club of Calgary, Calgary Catholic Immigrant Society, The Immigrant Education Society (formerly known as The Calgary Immigrant Educational Society), Safe Haven

## Winnipeg

YES Manitoba, Boys & Girls Club of Winnipeg

## Ontario

360° Kids, EPC Peterborough, Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board, YES Employment Services Thunderbay

## Ottawa

Ottawa Community Housing Foundation, Operation Come Home, Pathways to Education, Youth Employment Help Centre, Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Centre

## Coverage of YOD:

In 2020, though the pandemic has created challenges for disseminating YOD resources, YES has been able to take our coalition building virtual, by facilitating online train-the-trainer sessions, engaging with our city partners through check-ins, and offering online resources for them to disseminate to their clients.

We know *YES on Demand!* resources resonate with agencies across the country, because the reality YOD aims to address is a shared national one: empowering youth with evidence-based solutions is the path forward for employment agencies, for policy-makers, for funders, and most importantly, for youth.

These types of initiatives are essential to helping youth find employment.

Upskilling is very important and [we] appreciate that these opportunities are provided to youth. – BOYS AND GIRLS

CLUB OF CALGARY, CALGARY AB

3 Ways We Can Support Youth Employment in B.C.

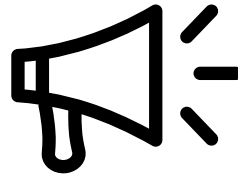
March 7, 2019, Breakfast Television  
Vancouver

President and CEO of YES  
Timothy Lang on the Specialized  
Mental Health Curriculum

August, 2019, CTV Morning  
Winnipeg

Youth Employment Services, Citi  
Foundation Create Entrepreneur  
Program for Disadvantaged Youth

August 15, 2019, Samaritanmag.com



Free program empowers Canadian youth  
to overcome barriers to employment

August 21, 2019, Global News

President Obama Meets YES CEO  
and Inspires Youth in Toronto

Jan 24, 2020, Toronto Star

Maclean's Magazine Names YES  
One of Top Charities in Canada

October 25, 2019, MacLean's  
Magazine



## What's Next for YES?

The research pre-dating the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the initial learnings that have been gathered in the early months of the pandemic-induced economic crisis, reinforce that the future of work relies on an agile workforce that are trained and able to adapt to the new technologies. Youth are equipped with the soft skills to navigate the workforce, but more resourcing is needed to develop the necessary hard skills needed in the workforce. Our hope is that, through a comprehensive framework of holistic supports, we can move forward together to support the employment and resiliency of our youth across Canada.

YES is looking ahead to what's next for youth employment solutions, and how to support youth to navigate the present day economy, with that research in mind. *YES2Tech* (Y2T), funded by the Citi Foundation, is our response to the need for an agile and technologically equipped workforce. As part of this program, an initial group of 25 youth will participate in an in-depth program that will help youth build 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce skills and leadership skills, in a innovative youth-driven environment. The initial pilot group will then undergo a train-the-trainer program in order to be equipped to facilitate digital literacy skills programs to other youth in turn. In this way, the

Y2T program looks to increase youth capacity and promote a growth mindset using a blended curriculum. This program will culminate in a technology thought leadership event in Toronto in 2021.

This program weaves together the best of what YES has to offer, combining work experience opportunities, mentorship, and hard skills training to offer a unique experience for youth at various stages of their employment journeys.

## Acknowledgement

We extend our thanks and gratitude to the Citi Foundation for making Yes on Demand! possible.

Without the generous support of the Citi Foundation and the Pathways to Progress Initiative, we would not be able to support thousands of youth in achieving their goals and supporting their career dreams, ambitions and aspirations. Across Canada, the Citi

Foundation has invested in a number of initiatives to strengthen young peoples' entrepreneurial mindset, acquire leadership, financial and workplace skills, and begin to engage in the formal economy through a first job.

We are fortunate to be  
aligned in a mission of  
empowering and

engaging young people to support the persistent issue of youth unemployment, and to be able to impact the youth accessing our services directly and indirectly through our coalition partners.

To learn more about the Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress, visit [www.citigroup.com/canada/en/community/pathways-to-progress.html](http://www.citigroup.com/canada/en/community/pathways-to-progress.html).

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